DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 041 249 AC 008 388

TITLE	Ohio Seminar for Administrators of Adult Basic Education (September 18-19, 1969).
INSTITUTION	Ohio State Board of Education, Columbus.
PUB DATE	70
NOTE	31p.
EDRS PRICE	FDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.65
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Basic Education, *Chief Administrators, Community Cooperation, *Learning Laboratories, *Mass Media, Political Issues, Public Education, *Recruitment, Seminars
IDENTIFIERS	*Ohio

ABSTRACT

At this adult basic education (ABE) administrators' seminar, an Ohio state senator urged educators to become better informed and more effectively involved in political activities affecting public education. The Director of Continuing Education in the Cincinnati Public Schools described forms of cooperation within communities in behalf of ABE. The manager of Adult Armchair Education in Philadelphia discussed ABE recruiting problems and effective strategies. The Director of Public Information for Columbus City Schools offered some guidelines on recruitment by mass media, and the Title 1 (Higher Education Act of 1965) Special Programs staff explained how to plan an ABE learning laboratory. (The document includes photos.) (LY)

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Ohio Seminar for Administrators of

Adult Basic Education

ED041249
AA000838

September 18-19, 1969

State of Ohio
Department of Education
Columbus, Ohio

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1970

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Foreword

In the recent decades we have experienced startling communications advancements, astounding developments in the computer process, and sophisticated combination of the computer and the communication process into a systems arrangement. The most far-reaching event of this century, however, may well be that as a result of this technological revolution, muscles have been removed from the employment market. With cataclysmic swiftness millions of people have been rendered unemployable.

Changing conditions produce new opportunities and new challenges. Today adult education must play a much greater role than in the past. Retraining and reentry into the educational system has never been more important for people who are not adequately prepared for employment and citizenship.

In Ohio we have now begun to move in a direction so that the state is a participating member in support of adult education. Continued state support, emphasis upon the importance of adult education, and the sharing of successful practices through conferences and publications such as this can maintain our momentum and move us closer to providing more Ohioans with meaningful lives and employment.

Martin W. Essex

RAYMOND A. HORN

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Preface

One of the several programs designed to attack the general social and economic problems of the undereducated adult is Adult Basic Education. The task of educating the adult is not an easy one. Present staff resources, materials and supplies, and instructional approaches are at best minimal to the demands of the task.

The purpose of a seminar, which was conducted September 18-19, 1969 at Columbus, Ohio, was to identify problem areas in Adult Basic Education—especially student recruitment and retention—and to consider collectively possible solutions to these problems.

As Director of the Division of Federal Assistance, Ohio Department of Education, I would like to acknowledge and extend my appreciation to the seminar participants. Special appreciation is extended to State Senator Oliver Ocasek, Ronald W. Howard, Craig Gifford, and Robert Finch whose presentations are included in this publication.

For making the seminar arrangements and for the preparation of this report, we are indebted to the School Management Institute.

R. A. Horn

OLIVER OCASEK

Senator
Twenty-Seventh District
State of Ohio

Politics and Education

Oliver Ocasek

Rather than to profess to be an expert in the field of Adult Basic Education, or other programs with which you work, my theme is the need for educators to become active political participants in the structure of the government in which they are enmeshed. If there is anything that I find teachers and educators naive and uninformed about, it is the political structure under which education functions in this great State of Ohio.

Understand Politics; Become Involved

I urge you in an educational sense to become active political citizens. Ten years ago such a statement would have been almost treason. My mouth should have been washed out with soap for even thinking such a horrible statement.

Politics and education don't mix. Yet, assuredly they must mix, because legislators are elected by people; and, the people who are known, who are vocal, who are working —these are the people to whom legislators respond.

A shock of my life was when I set foot in the legislature. I thought everyone was for education. Don't have such delusions, because for thirty-three senators we have over 300 registered lobbyists. That is over ten of them for each of us, and education is represented by less than ten lobbyists, plus organizations that plead the cause of education.

It's not that groups supporting lobbyists don't want good schools; they just have their hands in the political pot to extract dollars for other causes. We live in a competitive society.

Some of the most articulate people, some of the most educated people, some of the most knowledgeable people in the field of political

activity, absent themselves from their political responsibilities. And, I am talking about some of you.

Now, I am not asking you to play hookey from school to lobby the legislature. In fact, I once told about a thousand educators to go home. They wanted to march on the capitol. I said, "You will make fools of yourselves. Go home where you belong." I am not for teachers striking. If there is anything that destroys the reputation of educators, it is too much closing of schools because of negotiations and misunderstandings.

I urge you to join the Establishment – join the political structure. The many militant young people who are disenchanted with the Establishment, disturb me. They want to destroy it, knock it down. My advice to them is to join it, try to support it, and reform it.

People should be Republicans or Democrats. Be independent, if you like, in the general election. But, don't brag about independence to me if you don't have the determination to vote in a primary or don't assume any party responsibility. Only one out of sixty registered voters in America makes any contribution to a political party, and who do you think the political parties are going to be responsible to? The other fifty-nine? Well, they are going to be responsible to the sixtieth person who made a financial contribution, although they do go beyond financial considerations.

Be active. Talk to your state representative about Adult Basic Education, about adult educational needs. Talk to your state senator on a grass-roots level. Too many educators expect the State Department of Education, the OEA, or some other group to wave a magic wand before all 132 legislators. It is far more effective for my people to speak to me in my district because they vote for me and I listen to them.

There is nothing wrong with an educator being a proud, articulate member of a political party. To join isn't enough, just as paying PTA dues isn't where a parent's responsibility to his child should end.

I like people who support political parties – financially and issue-wise; I like people who reform the parties – both need changes from within. I like people who run for office and take part in them.

When the Ohio legislature is in session, you people should be talking to senators and representatives; you should be writing to Columbus; you should be involved so that the money will flow into your school district for vital programs. The brutal fact is that the wheel that squeaks gets the grease. Your message has been somewhat untold by you and I am urging you – at the risk of getting fired by your board and superintendent who don't want you to be a politically active citizen – urging you to be more active in politics. Don't expect the director of Adult Basic Education, the director of Title I programs, or the deputy superintendent in charge of federal programs, to do everything.

Educators, I love you, but you are a divided crew, and that is exactly what politicians want. They want you divided. They are happy that the superintendents are fighting with the classroom teachers and the OEA. They can say, "We can't do thus-and-so because you educators are not united." My good friend, Pogo of the comic pages, has said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." This utterance says it well.

Political Considerations

I try to wake up my finance class students by telling them that the biennial budget for the State of Ohio – now approaching $6 billion – is chicken feed compared to the annual federal budget of $196 billion. The annual budget for the State of Ohio is larger than the budgets of any of fifty countries of the world – not Samoa, with a couple hundred thousand people; but, for example, Pakistan with 110 million population compared to Ohio's 11 million population.

We appropriate a substantial sum of money in the State of Ohio for all functions of government, and yet the thing that many educators cannot comprehend is that the school bill is passed last, not first, in the legislative session.

Once upon a time I put a bumper sticker on my car that said *Schools Come First*, and one goal that I had as a legislator was to try to pass the school bill first, not last. A school bill hits the very heart of a senator or a representative. The school pupils and the taxpayers of his district are meaningful to him.

The political operation of a school bill is not politics in the way that most people understand politics. Politics to them is a partisan, divided, negative, an opposition-type endeavor. Not so, with the school bill; out of the 827 roll call votes during the 108th Session of the General Assembly, less than two score of them were strict party-line votes where one party said, "We are for this," and the other said, "We are against this." There are coalitions, sometimes mighty unusual coalitions!

What are the political considerations if they are not Republican and Democrat? They include big city versus rural. For example, aid to dependent children basically goes to the big cities with inner-city problems. But rural folks need help, too; some school districts need additional aid. Geographical, philosophical, and all types of opinions must be considered. This doesn't disturb me; this is life. People aren't all alike. Differences must be mediated and compromised.

Help for Adults

The statistics related to Adult Basic Education furnished to me by Department of Education officials were overwhelming. There certainly is a need to have such a program, a need to get people literate so that they can be gainfully employed. The job that you are performing has relevance to other problems confronting society.

The state doesn't really know which way to go in welfare; neither does the federal government. As state legislators, we did what all politicians do when they don't have a solution to a problem; we created a committee to study welfare problems. The committee – five senators and five representatives – is to make a report next year. And, we are going around in circles because we don't have answers.

I personally believe that there are some people on public assistance in Ohio who deserve more than what they are getting. The physically and mentally handicapped are our responsibility and they should get a hundred percent of what is needed for minimum decent living standards.

On the other hand, thousands of people who are recipients of welfare and public assistance, in my opinion, are deserving of much less. They need to be given the incentive to work with their able bodies and to try to get and keep a job. Monies they receive might then be funneled into other areas, including education. Helping such people is exactly where you people come in.

Last year, 12,739 adults were enrolled in the Adult Basic Education program, were provided instruction, and many are now more productive in the economy of Ohio. We can get people off the welfare rolls; not just increase handouts to a hundred percent of minimum standards, not just wring our hands and think wishfully that this terrible blight upon society will pass away. Adult education can indeed help people who are unskilled and untrained. Politicians should give the educational system from kindergarten through the adult program sufficient funds, personnel, and facilities to do the job. Then, individuals will be "turned out" who can be gainfully employed.

As one who has sat on the Education Committee and the Finance Committee, I am grateful for the improvements that have been made in education in Ohio. We still, however, have a distance to go in rendering quality education to all our youth; to provide educational programs for adults who are needy; and to expand the various other school programs. I am grateful though that the status quo of the thirties, the forties and, even the fifties, has ceased. For decades, we used excuses for not making the giant gains – the depression, the war, and so forth, under Republican and Democratic administrations alike. Now in the sixties, we have dared to do things differently; we have dared to move.

Your Job

Now, to talk about the program that concerns you. Think of the thousands of adults who have returned to school, who have become literate, who have become gainfully employed. The reported numbers must be entered into the records and presented to legislators who often deal glibly with money factors and statistics.

I, with my one track mind, believe that education is the one hope and one solution to the social ills of our society. I am both optimistic and pessimistic – we are making great gains in education, but our problems are being magnified. The problems of society are developing so rapidly that we can't keep up with them. The schools are the scapegoat and bear the brunt of attacks by many of our citizens. The state must provide the necessary funds and personnel to help solve societal problems.

Even though your numbers are small, your job is gigantic. Have the perseverance to carry on. It takes intestinal fortitude to be a director of a program which very frankly, in many places, is considered a necessary evil.

The challenge is monumental. I don't mean to be pessimistic; I think the future is going to be better, that people can be taken off welfare with the aid of adult education programs. They can become skilled and productive. Jobs and progress are integral parts with education and training.

Adult Basic Education is important, but

many educators in your district don't even know what you do. They think, "He messes around in some night classes or something, and the students are sort of illiterate. I guess he's a do-gooder."

You often stand alone in the political arena, too. Each of you – not just the State Department of Education – has much missionary work to do to convince some of us legislators that you are not only important, but that we ought to really know what you are doing.

Really, neither other educators nor politicians know, understand, or appreciate what you do. Misunderstanding and a provincial attitude play into the hands of a prevailing defeatist attitude.

Adlai Stevenson once said: "The ordeal of the Twentieth Century, the bloodiest, most turbulent era of the Christian Age, is far from over. Sacrifice, patience, understanding, and an implacable purpose may be our lot for years to come." This quote has little relevance to your job in adult education, and yet it has great relevance. You need sacrifice; you need patience; you need understanding; and you need a more resolute purpose to determine that what you are doing is so important that you are going to overcome the ignorance, the stupidity, the misunderstanding, the lack of patience, the lack of sacrifice of others, including educators and politicians.

I firmly believe that we will solve the social ills besetting mankind; we will alleviate the welfare burden; we will have jobs and progress by giving support to the Department of Education, the local boards, and, yes, the federal government which is furnishing almost all the present appropriation. The federal government should be thanked for showing the way; we in Ohio have been stingy in the past with pennies for some programs; we were afraid to experiment. The federal government gave us an incentive and we are now adding to those funds with some state money.

We can rejoice over many things; but, unfortunately many of us are pessimistic and critical of the things that have to be done. I cannot tell you how to expand the program in your school district; but I rejoice over the more than 12,000 people who last year participated in the Adult Basic Education program, many of whom have since begun full-time employment. You have made tax producers out of tax consumers, and your halos should glow brightly.

House Bill 531

Although not directly related to Adult Basic Education, let's consider House Bill 531 that just passed. The $188 million above the last biennium's subsidies for schools does not in my opinion make it the greatest school bill ever passed in Ohio, but it is nothing to scoff at.

The additional units that can now be approved in special education and vocational education are particularly gratifying. The planned increase for vocational classes is 1,960, up 61 percent. The needs in the vocational area are well publicized. Not all youngsters want to go to college, and 70 percent of today's jobs still do not require a baccalaureate degree. The 25 percent increase in special education units is something to rejoice over, but we haven't scratched the surface in this area.

The $75 million bond issue money that is earmarked for vocational education will be a real boom. In this field and in that of special education, giant steps have been taken.

I am, however, reserved in my praise for the funding of the overall Foundation Program. Teachers assuredly need higher salaries; school boards need more funds for libraries and equipment. Citizens want lower tax rates. And, politicians want credit for things they haven't done; at home, they find that praise isn't as bountiful as they thought it would be.

House Bill 531, as I see it, is an improvement, but it is not enough to do the job that many people are demanding be done.

In 1965, the House wrote the education bill and the Senate cleaned it up. In 1967, the Senate wrote the bill – Senate Bill 350 – and the House changed it. We got it back and changed it again. In 1969, it was the House's turn to write a bill; and when we were to vote on the amended Senate version it reminded me of a couple of blind people who held a convention to construct a house. The rooms were all on different levels and in different places – a jigsaw puzzle with pieces almost impossible to put together. But it was a school bill, and on the third day of July, the House passed it.

Each biennium Ohio has to have a school appropriation bill passed, and it has to be an improvement over the preceding year. In my opinion, the previous bill – Senate Bill 350 – was truly one of the greatest education bills passed because we made – at the suggestion of State Department officials and others – some rather massive revisions in statutes that previously tied the hands of local school districts, such as continuing levies.

But, in any event, the House passed this year's bill near the end of an eight-month session. They sent it to the Senate where we made eighty-four changes. I participated in forty-seven with the Education Committee and twenty-four with the Finance Committee. The others were changed by the Ways and Means Committee. When the bill went to a conference committee, five changes the Senate made were lost and conceded to the House. So, let us say that 79 changes were made by the Senate.

The bill under which we are operating is an omnibus bill with money for capital improvements; provisions for permissive county taxes; taxes on cigarettes, on gallonage of beer, on corporate franchise tax, on public utility tax; subsidies for public schools and for non-public schools; and all kinds of statutory revisions. Everything is in one pot – one big omnibus bill. There were a few things in the bill that I didn't like, but you have to pass judgment on the sum total.

Decade of Dissent

Americans are in a political age that is beset by dissent. You don't have to go far to find people who are dissatisfied with what is going on. As a student might say: "Teach, what's the problem?" And the problem, as I see it – more serious than getting money to run programs; more serious than any legislative problems – is the *decade of dissent*.

Youth, adults, even teachers, are dissatisfied with the Establishment – teachers who believe in militancy, in closing down schools, in making confetti of their contracts, in trying anything to get what they think they deserve.

Why are we confronted with so much misery and misunderstanding? Many people feel the Establishment has failed. Why go to school? It won't help us get better jobs. Why support the politicians? They are all crooks. Why do this? Why do that? If you think I am playing pipe tunes, you should read some of the 5,000 letters I got this year, six of them written in blood. I get letters from people who are paranoid, really maladjusted individuals.

Flag Waving

As educators (and I consider myself one) we don't claim to be perfect; we don't claim that discrimination has not and does not exist; we don't claim that the schools are perfect, a panacea for all of society's problems. But, we do claim that we have done a good job as one perceives the world, here and abroad. We are still educators for the masses. Education for the classes may work in Great Britain and some so-called western democracies – and I don't mean behind the Iron Curtain – but not in the United States.

We are willing to admit our shortcomings, but we ask the legislature and the people to give us the tools to do our job. Some Ohioans boast about two thousand new units in vocational education, indeed a gigantic step forward; but, we need six thousand more. Special education? Sometimes when you observe students, a majority seem to need special education, and I mean that kindly.

I don't claim that Ohio is perfect, that it has all the answers to all education problems. My greatest hope is that people in some 6,000 public school buildings with 2,400,000 boys and girls do care. These people experiment; they try; they need support.

When our founding fathers came out of Independence Hall, people on the street asked, "What have you wrought?"

Benjamin Franklin, the Will Rogers of the day said, "We have a republic, if we can keep it."

Alexander Hamilton, on the other hand, strode out in a fit of rage. He was disgusted with everything that had been done. He wanted to make George Washington king. Only the rich, the well born, and the able should govern. A brilliant man! As the first Secretary of the Treasury, he *collected more money than the Federal Government spent!* Yet, his hot temper and his lack of understanding of the common man led to his downfall, and Mr. Burr ran him through in a duel.

The author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, said, "We have a government in which people can govern their own destiny."

You have a responsibility to commit yourselves to political activity. Whether you run for office or not is your business; whether you join a political party or not is your business; but whether you get involved in the complicated business of trying to get funding for educational statutes is your business.

I want to say to the educators in Ohio – as kindly and temperately as I can – that by and large you have absented yourselves from political responsibility. The politicians are aware of it, so they politely listen to you and go merrily on their way doing as they please. I urge you, as the television celebrity says, "Keep those cards and letters coming." Politicians are influenced by what you say, even though they may resent the temper of the times.

A Final Thought

As we senators and representatives stumble feebly along in the legislative halls, I can only ask you to persevere and to walk the second mile. My final thought goes back that snowy day on January 20, 1961, when I saw a handsome young American assume the mantle of leadership as the thirty-fifth President of the United States. It was John F. Kennedy who said; "It is important, my fellow Americans, that this nation sail ever onward and not lie still in the harbors of thought."

Yet, as brilliant as the words of the thirty-fifth President of the United States were, I heard that day four lines of prose which were even more meaningful than that inaugural address. Robert Frost – so aged and arthritic he could barely stumble to the podium, so poor of sight he could not read that which he had written, so hard of hearing he did not understand when they told him to speak, gave these thoughts well worth remembering: "The forests are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep."

You and I are God's children. Our forests are lovely, dark, and deep: a life span of 73 compared with a world-wide average of 43; a life devoid of hunger, ignorance, and disease – the plight of the common man. Our forests are lovely, dark, and deep – but you and I are not worthy of the label educator unless we have promises to keep, and miles to walk before we sleep.

ROBERT FINCH

Director
Division of Continuing Education
Cincinnati City Schools

Adult Basic Education and Community Partnerships

Robert Finch

Work with Community Agencies

An active working relationship between public schools and other community agencies in the area of continuing education is not new – something education has just discovered under a multiplicity of federal programs. To be sure, within the past six years, new federal and state statutes have given impetus to the community partnership concept but the basic idea hasn't changed in half a century.

Stated very simply, continuing education is noncompulsory education. In contrast with public school compulsory education, continuing education must depend upon the interests and the desires of people to raise their levels of educational ability. As we know, interest and desire are particularly important in Adult Basic Education. Employed workers in need of upgrading academic skills and even high school dropouts come back to school much more readily than do persons who have never had the opportunity to complete an elementary education.

To serve the maximum number of people who need continuing education – Adult Basic Education in particular–public education must be deeply involved with other community agencies and with business and industry. The reason is that most community agencies, businesses, and industries have direct and continuous contact with the people who need Adult Basic Education.

There are, of course, many ways of reaching people in need of continuing education. Printed announcements, brochures, and letters to parents are all excellent – provided the people who receive them can read the content. Each educator tends to favor particular methods or techniques, be they radio, tele-

vision, or information booths on the town square. In my opinion, the community partnership is one of the best means of reaching prospective adult students. May I say at the outset, however, that *there is no substitute for good instruction in the classroom – including above-average empathy for people.* Community partnerships help you to reach more people who will, in turn, tell their friends and relatives about available educational opportunities. Students – ones who feel that they are learning and that the result will be increased opportunities to advance themselves up the economic ladder – will encourage other persons to become students.

Tuition fees have never held or helped students receiving mediocre instruction–neither will financial incentives provided through partnership arrangements hold students if the quality of instruction is mediocre.

Take Education to the People

About fifteen years ago the Council of the Southern Mountains invited approximately fifteen people from the Cincinnati area to spend a week in the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee talking to the people and getting a feel for the changing social and economic patterns of the city. The group represented public and private agencies, organized labor, the Council of Churches, and other organizations. Talking it over among ourselves at that time, we decided that there was nothing sacred about the four walls of a school building. Why not take adult elementary education to the people in their own neighborhoods? YMCA's, churches, hospitals, neighborhood houses, and other organizations readily agreed to provide space for instruction without charge.

The public schools agreed to provide the teachers and the instructional materials and to supervise the instructional program. The county welfare department, labor organizations, churches, neighborhood houses, and other organizations with direct contact with people agreed to recruit students and to assist in job placement of the unemployed. A decision was also made to tie job training with adult elementary education whenever possible, gearing adult elementary education directly to the particular type of job training. These practices are commonly accepted now, but at that time the term *innovation* hadn't been coined.

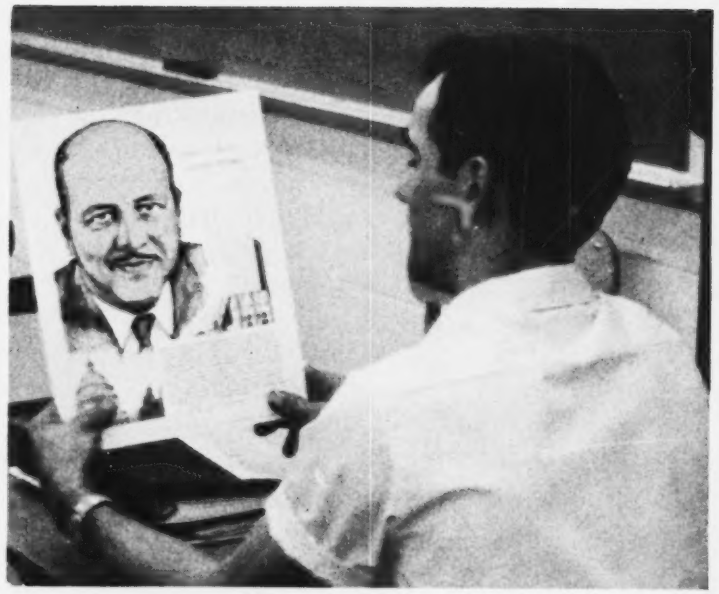
We learned many years ago that the poor are not necessarily unemployed or lazy. But millions of poor people do lack the basic educational skills to move beyond the $1.65 an hour pay scale and earn a decent living wage to raise a family. When MDT (Manpower Development Training) programs came into being, we had a difficult time convincing the Department of Labor of the relationship between Adult Basic Education, job training, and the upgrading of employed workers. Under the partnership concept, each organization performs services in the area in which it has particular knowledge, skill, and funds. It has been clearly established that each agency, including public education, can perform its particular functions best if it works in an active partnership with other organizations.

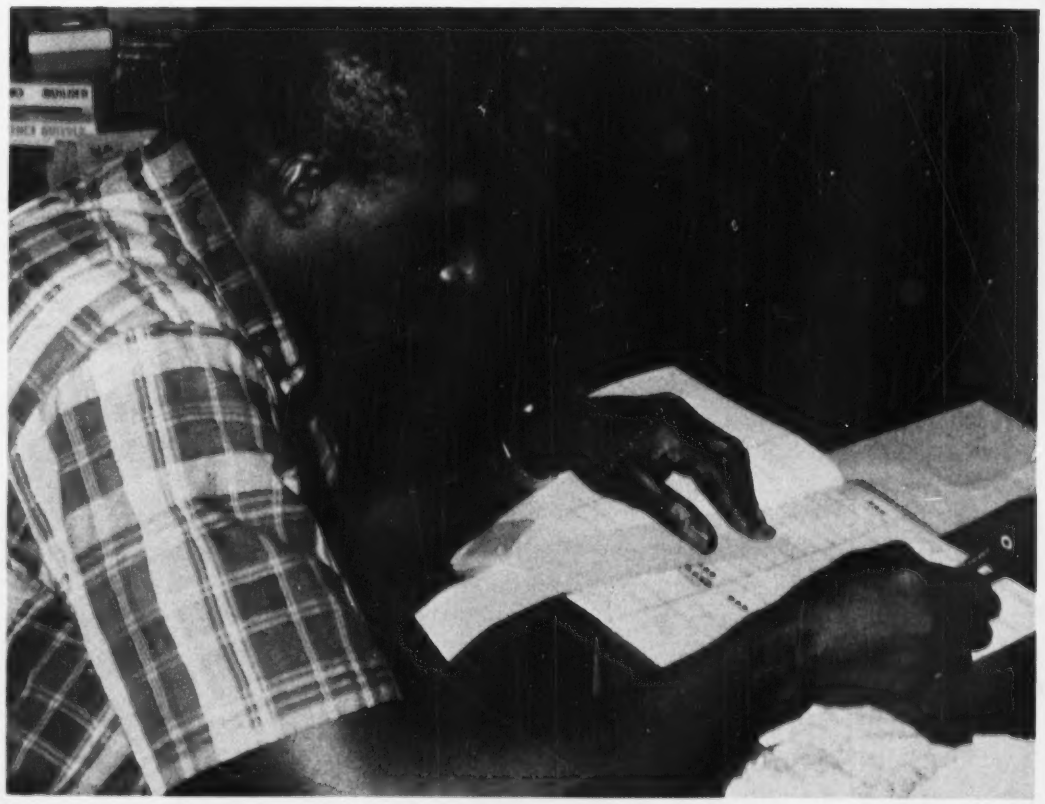
If Necessary, Be a Silent Partner

Frequently, a big hang-up in community partnerships is "who gets the credit." This blocks community partnerships more than any other factor. It isn't easy to read newspaper stories and hear public reports about the successful operation of classes by other agencies – to be, in effect, a silent partner when necessary.

Being silent is a matter of choice. Shall we educators go about the business of organizing and operating classes in our own buildings for a relatively limited number of students, or shall we become the silent partner with scores of other agencies and serve two or three times as many people?

Why don't the other agencies organize and operate their own classes? In spite of the many criticisms of the "establishment," they recognize that the public schools are capable





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of doing a good job of instruction. Partnership arrangements also free agencies to do recruitment and job placement – areas in which they have knowledge and skill. The pooling (not commingling) of federal funds through a partnership arrangement avoids the serious competition and duplication of effort that exists in many communities today. Pooling does require public school leaders to spend many hours in planning meetings with other agencies. The leadership turnover, especially among some of the newer federally funded programs, is heavy. Sometimes federal guidelines for two or more programs are difficult to intertwine. If a particular agency runs into serious political problems or problems of mismanagement, the public schools cannot completely disassociate themselves from the partnership although they have no authority or control over the operations of the agency.

Provide for Instructional Flexibility

On the brighter side, the trends in Adult Basic Education and high school completion programs toward individualized programmed instruction and computer assisted instruction, toward learning laboratories rather than formal classes, are giving greater flexibility for instructing students. Such changes should increase the opportunities for working with scores of public and private community agencies. Instructional materials for Adult Basic Education are improving and schools are becoming more selective in their choices of multi-media materials. A corps of experienced teachers is developing. These trends help to strengthen community partnership arrangements.

Can we through our Adult Basic Education program provide the educational experiences that will assist people in making both short- and long-term adjustment to changing social and economic conditions? Can we, through partnership efforts, tie Adult Basic Education more closely to changing job opportunities and provide opportunities for better income for the poor? Can we teach consumer economic concepts – how to utilize income effectively – as a part of reading, writing, and computation skills? The latter was one of the original concepts of Adult Basic Education but a lack of good instructional materials has been a deterrent.

Use Available Funds Advantageously

The passage of House Bill 238, providing state reimbursement for high school completion programs for students over 21, should enable public schools in the state to extend basic education through the high school level. Reimbursement opens up the possibility of in-plant and community agency programs that include high school credit classes as well as Adult Basic Education. Ohio has truly taken a giant step forward; this time Ohio is ahead of federal legislation.

Many commercial organizations with impressive technical names are, however, now coming on the scene. For a substantial percentage of available funds they prepare the federal proposals, supposedly recruit students, and relieve business and industry of the responsibility of operating educational programs. Many business and industrial organizations are entering into such agreements simply because they do not know what the public schools can offer in partnership under provisions of the federal Adult Education Act of 1966, Ohio Senate Bill 350, and Ohio House Bill 238.

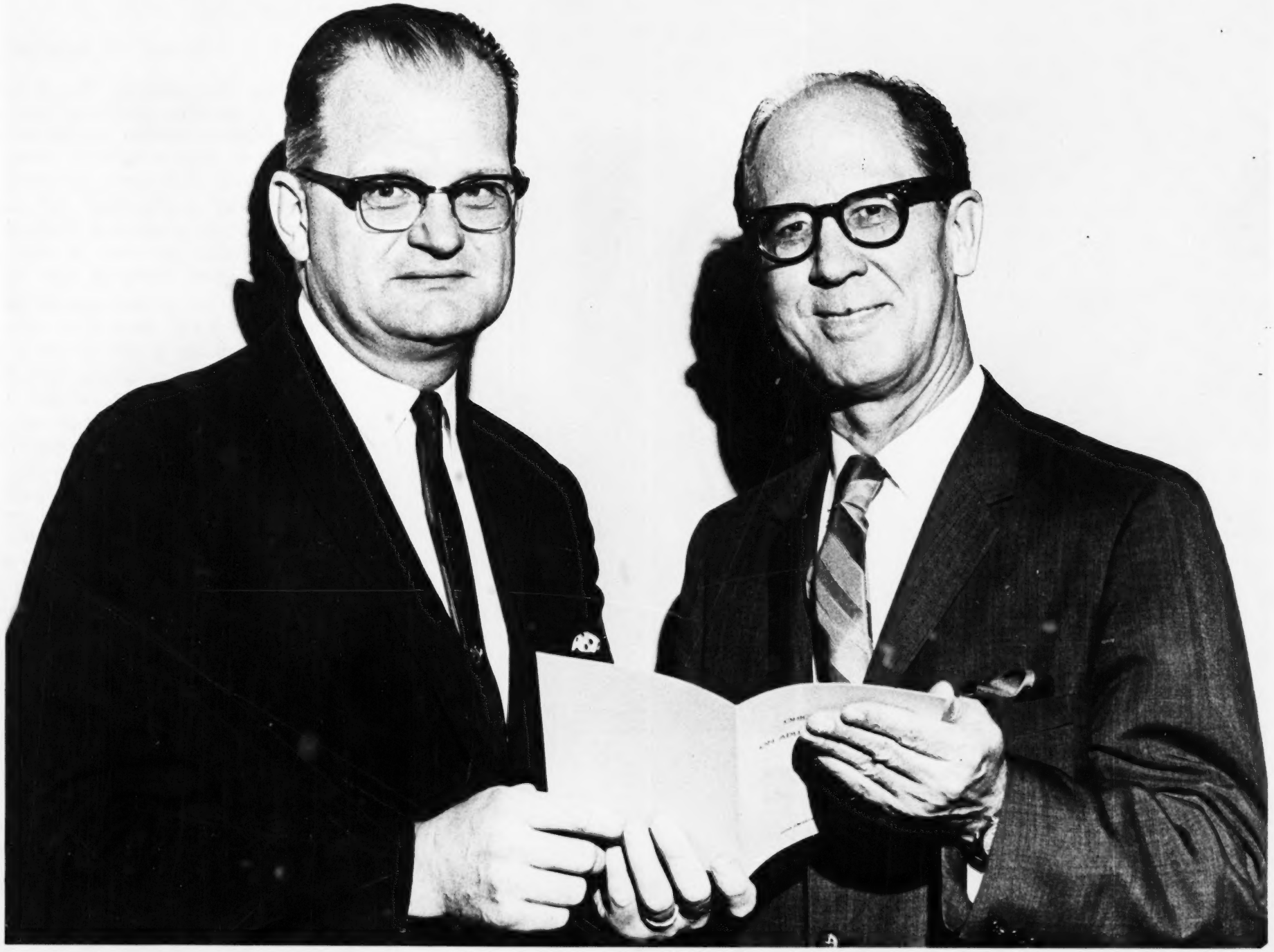
Take the Initiative

As educators of adults, we do have a responsibility to take the initiative in informing other agencies and business and industry of the fact that the public schools can provide educational services in partnership arrangements. We must also provide qualified teachers, ones with above average empathy. Such persons are not easy to find, but the Adult Education Act does provide funds for the inservice training of teachers.

Help Remove People from Economic Bondage

The *Wall Street Journal* pointed out in a September, 1969, article that the social-economic problems of today are no longer confined to the big cities in Ohio and other industrial states. Adult Basic Education, high school completion programs, and job preparatory programs are no longer a "something extra" that superintendents and boards of education can add if they just happen to feel in the mood. The federal government has repeatedly warned the public schools that they must come from behind their four walls and make public education a realistic possibility for millions of people. The warning has not been taken seriously by some public school leaders. If they feel that a federally financed dual system of public education is going to be confined to out-of-school youth and adults, they may be badly mistaken. Let's hope that Adult Basic Education not only sets the pattern for new instructional methods and techniques but that it also demonstrates that the public schools can work hand in hand with every public and private community agency that is interested in education.

Adult Basic Education is at the heart of the social-economic problems of our country. Without the ability to read and write, training for today's jobs is futile; the attainment of a high school education, documented by either a diploma or equivalency testing, is practically impossible. Why then was it so difficult to convince Congress of the need for Adult Basic Education? Why has it been so difficult to keep Adult Basic Education as a major component in the U.S. Office of Education? Far too many people, as demonstrated in private conversations, want to keep a sizeable portion of our people in virtual economic bondage. It is imperative that public schools, in both large and small communities, work in direct partnership with other community agencies to help overcome the most serious domestic problem facing our nation.



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Improving ABE Recruitment Results

Ronald W. Howard

When one reviews the status of Adult Basic Education programs operating across the country, certain problems are clearly unique to local conditions while others are experienced with great frequency and have far-reaching implications beyond the individual programs affected. One clear example in the latter category is the problem of recruiting and retaining ABE students.

For you, the participants of the Ohio Conference in Adult Basic Education, the reality of this problem is readily evident. A recent survey of ABE programs operating in Ohio identified recruitment as the number one problem area; and, I assure you that you are not alone in this regard. Indeed, the national statistics on ABE participation reveal that the approximate 1.3 million persons reached nationally in ABE programs represent less than five percent of the potential population needing ABE training and skills development. Viewed from a harsher perspective, we are missing better than ninety-five percent of the estimated people who need ABE services.

These factors clearly suggest that a major key to the continued success, growth, and refinement of ABE program services lies in a better understanding of the problems involved in recruiting adult participants and a greater willingness to experiment with potential solutions to our present recruitment shortcomings. With this in mind, I will concentrate on two areas of concern:

1. What are the basic problems in recruiting adults for ABE programs?
2. What recommendations and suggestions can be offered to help overcome the difficulties of ABE recruitment?

RECRUITMENT CONCERNS

Many times the inability to attract adult participants into our respective programs leads to the premature and mistaken conclusion that people don't care about education; that "they don't give a damn." Program administrators must recognize that it is not enough to say that people aren't interested. Indeed, one of the specific objectives of recruitment is to *get* people interested in the skills and services which your program has to offer. This, in turn, requires the development of recruitment strategies which are responsive to the problems and needs of those adults whom you are hoping to attract. Let us begin by considering five realistic problems and concerns involved in the task of recruiting adults into ABE programs.

ABE Enrollment Requires Behavorial Change

To fully appreciate the requirements of effective recruitment, we must first recognize the very substantial commitment and behavorial change which is required on the part of ABE participants. Consider for example the following expectations and changes which are required from those adults whom we are attempting to attract into the program:

- ABE participants are asked to return to a school environment which they have been away from for a considerable number of years. In many cases, the ABE learning environment is unfamiliar, formalized, and inconvenient.
- To regularly attend ABE classes, participants must alter their normal and established patterns of work, relaxation, and enjoyment.
- ABE participants must commit themselves to a program which usually requires a number of years to complete.
- ABE participants are expected to commit themselves to the task of relearning basic skills which were never adequately mastered and which were previous sources of difficulty, frustration, and failure.

These factors are but a few which could be mentioned to highlight both the attitudinal and behavorial changes which are necessary for adults to commit themselves to ABE programs. Clearly, it is not enough to merely open the doors and assume that students will voluntarily come flooding in. On the contrary, recruitment techniques must be developed to reach out into communities and to convince adults that it is to their advantage to make the various commitments and behavorial changes which are required for participation.

Fears and Anxieties Are Related to Learning

A second obstacle which must be overcome by participants in ABE programs involves the normal fears and anxieties which uneducated and under-educated adults frequently associate with learning experiences. This factor is closely inter-linked with the first problem of behavorial changes. In most cases ABE students have experienced frustration and failure in their previous school environments. The thought of returning to a learning situation quite frequently arouses old fears and anxieties that have become identified with the learning process. Most adults who have not acquired certain basic skills are both sensitive about their shortcomings and doubtful of their capabilities.

Clearly, the easiest solution is to avoid being exposed to any learning environment which might prove threatening or embarrassing. This does not imply that under-educated adults do not know and respect education. Quite the contrary, they know and respect the value of education better than you and I ever will. Everyday they must suffer the consequences of not having mastered those basic skills which are necessary to cope effectively in our modern society. It is precisely the fears and anxieties associated with learning which frequently prevents them from *acting upon* the desire for continued education. Thus, a major task of effective recruitment lies in personally involving the

undereducated adult who must be made to feel that his participation in ABE will be comfortable, friendly, and relevant to his needs.

A Gap Separates People and Programs

A third problem area which complicates the task of recruiting adults into ABE programs results from the communication gap which exists between programs, which have services to offer, and the people who are in need of these services. This factor is particularly relevant when the target audience for an ABE program is the urban disadvantaged. How do we communicate the message of ABE to illiterates and functional illiterates? How do we inform our target audiences of who we are; what we do; how, when, and where they can enroll; and what benefits their involvement will yield? These are but a few of the questions that must be resolved through the recruitment strategies which we develop to communicate basic information on ABE programs to those people who are most in need of the services.

Recruitment Requires Personalized Contacts

A fourth major problem in attracting adult participants results from the fact that most ABE programs rely entirely upon *indirect* recruitment methods (radio promotionals, TV announcements, newspaper ads, posters, mass mailings, throw-outs), methods which have limited effectiveness in bringing undereducated persons into a program. The initial reaction of most adults to the prospect of committing themselves to an ABE program is to specify all the reasons why they *cannot* attend (I'm too busy, I'm too old, I don't have time, the program doesn't apply to me). Indirect recruitment methods offer no possibility for countering these superficial objectives. Thus, it is easy for a potential adult participant to say no to a poster, a letter, or indeed any other form of indirect communication

The only method of effectively countering the initial objections of prospective program participants is through direct face-to-face contact by a knowledgeable representative of the program. This implies the need to develop *direct* as well as indirect recruitment strategies in meeting excuses. This further suggests the need to include in the program design specific resources in the form of a paid recruitment staff to handle direct approaches.

Most Adults Do Not View ABE as a Priority

The final obstacle to ABE participation resides in the fact that most adults do not consider ABE training as a priority – it is usually perceived as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Clearly, the needs and problems of ABE participants are multiple. Thus, ABE skills training assumes a reasonably low priority when compared with such needs as a job, or a better job, or job training. Even personal concerns – such as medical attention, dental care, housing needs, or public assistance – are received with greater urgency by potential ABE participants than the need to improve their basic skills to an eighth-grade level of proficiency.

The low priority assigned to ABE training looms as a major obstacle when ABE programs are offered in isolation of other services and needs which are perceived as more immediate and practical by the potential adult audience. Since the problems confronting ABE participants are highly inter-related,

rather than isolated, one possible solution might be to establish ABE classes in conjunction with other programs and services which have a high priority among the target populations.

RECRUITMENT GUIDELINES

The five problem areas outlined above serve to clarify a few of the complexities which must be considered when designing recruitment strategies for ABE programs. Before concluding with some specific recommendations for improving ABE recruitment results, I would like to offer three general guidelines for program administrators.

Recognize Recruitment as Essential

One of the most important indexes for gauging the effectiveness of educational programs is the ability to attract and retain student participants. All the program resources are rendered superfluous if classes are empty. We would not think of designing educational programs which do not include teachers, equipment, curriculum materials, and administrative support. Similarly, we must begin to include staff recruiters as an essential resource for ABE programs.

Recruitment Is Not Public Relations.

Recruitment is direct activity that gets members of the target group into the classroom. Public relations develops interest and acceptance of the educational program, and creates a climate in which direct recruitment can be more effective.

Don't Be Afraid to "Sell" Your Program.

It is surprising how many educators feel that there is something unethical about promoting their program. My feeling is that the reverse is true – that it is unethical *not* to sell your program. Certainly many of the problems faced in our communities stem from the lack of skills held by undereducated adults. If strong promotion of educational programs does not occur, how will basic skills be acquired?

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Concern up to this point has focused upon identifying some of the common obstacles to adult participation in ABE. This is clearly a necessary first step to providing meaningful solutions to problems uncovered. I should like to conclude by offering specific recommendations which have largely resulted from successful recruitment strategies employed in Philadelphia's Adult Armchair Education Program (AAE), a unique outreach component of the Opportunities Industrialization Center. AAE is currently funded as a Demonstrational Special Project of USOE, Division of Adult Education Programs. One of the specific thrusts of the AAE Special Project is to experiment with innovative methods and techniques for attracting urban adults into programs of continued education. For our purposes, I suggest that you concentrate upon the following immediate and practical suggestions which should prove feasible in your ABE program.

Develop Inter-Agency Cooperation

The ability to recruit adults into ABE programs can be significantly enhanced through the cultivation of inter-agency cooperative ties. At least two immediate and practical benefits can be derived from the aggressive development of inter-agency linkages:

- Other agencies and programs provide an effective focal point for referring potential ABE participants *into* your program.
- ABE trainees can be referred *from* your program to other agencies and services.

This two-way referral system of inter-agency cooperation not only enables other programs to direct their clients into ABE training; it also meaningfully expands the scope of services which can be offered to adults enrolled in your program. The attractiveness of your ABE program is greatly increased if adults are assisted in coping with such immediate needs as housing, medical and dental care, legal problems, public assistance concerns, and job placement and training. This two-way capability is immediately possible if inter-agency coordination is developed with the appropriate programs and services in your community.

Develop Ties with "Community-Based Groups"

Working relationships with local community groups can be just as meaningful to your recruitment results as inter-agency cooperation. The important factor lies in identifying those community-based organizations which are likely to have an ongoing contact and rapport with the adult populations which you are attempting to recruit into your ABE program. Thus, communication and referral linkages should be established with such community-based sources as churches, block clubs, and civic groups. In addition to the advantages which result from a two-way referral system, you may also find that local community groups can provide valuable inputs on the strengths and weaknesses of your ABE program as perceived from the vantage point of the target groups whom you hope to attract.

Expand Your Outreach Through Volunteers

A third recommendation for improving ABE recruitment results lies in the utilization of volunteer resources. This alternative is especially attractive when budget limitations preclude the immediate possibility of hiring staff recruiters. Volunteers – if carefully screened, supervised, and trained – can provide a productive means for expanding the outreach of your program directly into target neighborhoods and communities.

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), National Teachers Corps, and college work-study programs are three sources which should be explored for volunteers who might assist in implementing a structured program of direct recruitment. Each of these outlets is valuable because persons from these sources are usually available for full-time assignments to your program. In addition, college volunteer programs and local community volunteers

should be cultivated to help supplement the resources available for direct recruitment approaches.

Use Indirect Recruitment Methods

Indirect recruitment methods (radio promotionals, TV announcements, newspaper ads, posters, mass mailings, throw-outs), despite their limited effectiveness in bringing adults into your program, nevertheless play an important role in improving recruitment results. When designed effectively, indirect recruitment techniques serve to communicate information about your program to persons in need of ABE services. They serve to foster a climate of awareness and acceptance of your services among the potential target groups. This capability becomes invaluable if you are able to supplement indirect recruitment strategies with direct face-to-face contacts.

Considerable attention and planning should be given to the task of designing indirect recruitment tools which have maximum impact upon the adult populations being recruited. Television and radio stations should be approached to run spot announcements and promotionals as part of their public service requirements. Concentrate upon radio stations which have greatest appeal to your target populations (popular disc jockeys, Spanish-speaking stations). Similarly, you should focus upon newspapers which have greatest circulation among your intended populations. Advertisements, public interest stories, and news releases should be forwarded to small community newspapers as well as to large newspapers.

Posters, throw-outs, flyers and informational brochures should be designed with the thought of making maximum impact upon the potential ABE candidate. The use of photographs, cartoons, other illustrations, and large type should be considered.

Finally, don't be afraid to experiment. A very successful indirect recruitment technique resulted from the insertion of informational flyers in each of the checks issued to public assistance recipients in the Philadelphia area. This again reflects the value of inter-agency cooperation. Another successful approach was the printing of an ABE program advertisement on the side of milk cartons widely sold in low-income neighborhoods. These, and many other possibilities, should be considered by ABE program administrators who are concerned with improving recruitment results.

Initiate Direct Recruitment Techniques

The experiences of the Adult Armchair Education Program in Philadelphia strongly suggest that the most effective method of recruiting undereducated adults into ABE classes is face-to-face contact by paid staff members who are themselves selected from the indigenous target population.

A final recommendation is that ABE program administrators recognize the need to include in the program design specific resources in the form of a paid recruitment staff to handle this critical program function. The special skills and talents of the trained recruiter can be utilized to involve the undereducated resident who must be made to feel that his participation will be comfortable, friendly, and relevant to his needs. No method other than direct confrontation by a recruiter who is perceived as "like us" will successfully involve this target group.

As a concluding observation, persons selected for recruitment positions should be drawn from the target populations to be served by the program. The essential requirement in recruitment is an ability to communicate. Recruiters should, therefore, understand the language, attitudes, mentality, and life style of the intended target group. These qualities are best ensured if the recruiter is himself a part of the indigenous community.

CRAIG GIFFORD

Director
Public Information
Columbus City Schools

Use of the News Media in Recruitment

Craig Gifford

As a school public relations officer I am often reminded of the following story:

A South Sea Island cannibal was extra hungry. He went to a cannibal delicatessen and told the manager he wanted something very special.

The manager said, "Well, we have a special on brains today."

The cannibal thought this sounded good and so he said, "I'll take a couple of pounds."

Then the manager said, "But, we have three kinds – we have teachers' brains at $1 a pound; we have superintendents' brains at $2 a pound and we have public information directors' brains at $4 a pound."

After hearing this the cannibal was enraged. "How in the world can you get $4 a pound for public information directors' brains?" he asked.

The manager looked at the cannibal and said, "Did you ever stop to think how many public information directors it takes to get a pound of brains?"

I'm sure some of you have had reason to believe, as you have dealt with public information directors or public relations officers from time to time, that the story might be true.

Before you begin setting a price on my brains, let me assure you that neither will I attempt to tell you how to run your Adult Basic Education programs nor suggest that everything I say will work with each and every program.

Because of differences in communities, conditions, and circumstances, there are many ways to approach recruitment through use of the news media. What will be said here will not apply and cannot apply to every

situation. Hopefully, though, some of the suggestions can be adapted and made worthwhile.

Use Tact

Handling recruitment takes a certain amount of tact. And, tact reminds me of another story:

A captain approached one of his sergeants with a bit of bad news. "Sergeant," he said, "we just got notice that Smith's grandmother died. You'd better break the news to him."

The sergeant walked into the barracks, paused at the doorway, and shouted, "Hey, Smith, your grandmother died."

The captain was horrified, "Sergeant, that's no way to tell a man that his grandmother has died. Look how you've shocked him. You have to use tact in a situation like this. I think we'd better send you to Tact and Diplomacy School."

So the sergeant spent a year studying at Tact and Diplomacy School. On the day he returned, the captain approached him.

"Well, sergeant, how did you do in school?"

"Fine," replied the sergeant. "I've really learned how to be tactful."

The captain said, "That's good, because we've just gotten notice that Fisher's grandmother died. You'll have to go in and tell him."

The sergeant entered the barracks, paused at the doorway, and called the men to attention. When they were lined up, he stepped before them and ordered, "All those with living grandmothers step forward . . . not so fast, Fisher."

So, we must use tact as we approach the subject of student recruitment, . . . maybe not quite like the sergeant.

Develop the Story

In my opinion, there is nothing more effective than a straight-shooting story—but, there is more than one way to tell a story. Let's take these facts:

- Adult Basic Education Program
- Columbus Public Schools
- For persons 16 years of age or older
- Basic education, grades 1-8
- All materials furnished
- Registration, anytime during the 1969-70 school year
- No charge

Let's look at the way an educator might write a lead paragraph for this program:

Registration is underway for the Adult Basic Education Program sponsored by the Columbus Public Schools for the 1969-70 school year. There is no charge for the program designed for adults who desire self improvement in courses through the eighth grade.

A newspaper editor might rewrite the story:

The Columbus Public Schools are currently accepting registrations for their Adult Basic Education Program.

Anyone over 16 who has not completed grades 1 through 8 may attend free of charge. All materials are furnished.

Actually the rewrite isn't bad, but it tends to belittle the potential student. Now, let the same facts get in the hands of a young reporter who wants to dress it up with his own imagination and creative writing:

Adults, 16 years or older who can't read, write, spell or figure are being offered a no-charge, free material adult basic education program by the Columbus Public Schools. Registration is currently open.

Or he might say:

The Columbus Schools are going to educate the taxpayer who can't read or write. A new adult basic education program for drop-outs over 16 who haven't finished grades 1 through 8 is planned and registration is underway. School officials have indicated that no charge will be made and crayons will be furnished.

Such a story doesn't help a bit. Sometimes — regardless of what you submit — you will end up with something ridiculous; but chances are if an article is presented properly, it will appear with most of the pertinent information.

Explore the Possibilities

Do paragraph-length articles such as we have just examined really help in recruitment? Short articles informing people of registration and pertinent facts are necessary, but they can hardly be classified as real recruiting tools.

If such articles aren't recruiting tools, what is? Keep in mind the type of person you are seeking. Chances are that brief announcements on radio and television would reach more of them than a story in the newspaper. How many of your potential students read a newspaper from cover to cover? Probably very few. Yet, most educators and public relations officers have a weakness. They seem to think that the key is to get information in the newspaper. This media should not be ignored, but it is not *the* key. If you use newspaper announcements for recruitment purposes, remember that one or more pictures would be extremely helpful.

If you develop announcements for radio and television, try to get them worked into news shows from time to time. Additionally, public service announcements — a colorful slide or two for TV, a clever tape for radio — can be very effective.

Look also at other sources, such as company newspapers. Learn which firms in your area have newspapers and have employees who might be interested in the Adult Basic Education program you offer. Write a story and take it to the editor, time permitting. Or, mail the article but give the editor a call in advance and tell him what the story might mean to some company employees.

Consider the possible effectiveness of a story in the school newspaper. Students reading it might encourage their parents to participate, if they have need in this area.

Newspapers, radio, TV, company newspapers or house organs, and school papers . . . these are major outlets for news that may be helpful in recruitment.

Use Your Outlets

How can you best use news outlets, keeping in mind that a straight news release is perhaps the least effective?

Maybe you can persuade a newsman to

write a feature about your program. Perhaps you can place yourself on a radio or TV talk show to tell about the overall program. Or, you can try to get a student who is sold on the program interviewed for a news article, a radio show, or TV featurette.

Possibly, you have a former student working in a factory or company which has its own newspaper. If he is willing, his testimony in a story can be much more effective than anything *you* say about the program.

If you are located in a large city, you have one or more television stations which are undoubtedly cooperating with your school system in providing free time for a 15 or 30 minute public service program each week, maybe even more. If this is the case, talk to the producer of the show. See if you might interest him in spotlighting your program on one of his shows.

Perhaps, some of you are from areas where the use of a television station, a radio station, or even a daily newspaper for recruitment-oriented stories might be difficult to arrange. If this is the case, take advantage of the weekly paper or papers which serves your school district. Feed them all the information you can – tell about the program, suggest a student who is willing to be featured, describe the different classes, spotlight a teacher.

Use Common Sense

Be sold on the program before you try to sell it to the news media. You must believe in the program to be able to sell your product. If you are a super salesman, you will get super results. But use common sense, and that reminds me of a certain young reporter:

A cub reporter, who had just completed journalism school and taken a job on the staff of a local newspaper, listened intently to the editor's instructions:

"Never write anything as a fact unless you are absolutely sure about it, or you'll get the paper into trouble. Make it a point to use the words *alleged, reputed, claimed, rumored,* or *it was said.*"

The reporter kept repeating these orders to himself as he went out on his first assignment. When he returned he turned in this story:

It is rumored that a party was given yesterday by a number of reputed ladies. Mrs. Smith, it was said, was hostess, and the guests, it is alleged, with the exception of Mrs. Jones, who says she's fresh from London, were all local people. Mrs. Smith claims to be the wife of Joe Smith, rumored to be the president of an alleged bank.

The point is that whatever you do, do it in moderation. You can overdo any of the suggestions made here and be a total failure. So what is overdoing? You'll have to decide. Common sense enters very prominently in each judgment.

Follow Through

As a rule of thumb, publicize your program enough to get people talking about it. Recruitment isn't something you do for a week and forget. It must have follow through. Once you have begun classes and have students motivated, take some pictures (with student permission); develop a feature story (or have a newsman or public information director develop a story); invite TV personnel in to see what is going on; or, spotlight a successful student who is willing to endorse the program.

Develop Your Own News Media

Perhaps you can develop your own news media with a brief publication telling about some of your students. When it is handed out in class, a student's pride in seeing his own name in print could well be a real recruitment boost.

While all of you have the same essential goal in mind as you operate your programs, it is different from the program in another district. This difference is very possibly an angle for a story, the uniqueness of your program.

Today, in education circles, the word *innovation* is magic. No one is sure what it means, but it has to do with new methods and new programs. You may have an innovation in your Adult Basic Education program, and want to publicize it.

Keep Your Story Simple

While you are publicizing your program, while you are telling about its features, keep in mind that you are not as interested in impressing the general public as you are in encouraging people to participate. Whatever you say, *keep it simple!* Don't use words that are only understood by college graduates. Use words that will be understood by prospective participants.

Develop Rapport with Newsmen

We've talked about outlets for publicity, and types of stories. Now, we need to think about developing rapport with members of the news media.

No matter how many good ideas you have, how fine your program is, how well your stories are written, or how original your promotion is – if you aren't able to communicate with members of the news media, you will be lost.

If your school has a public information or public relations officer, it would probably be best to work through him. You may have an idea on proper promotion of your program through the news media, but may not be familiar with the details involved, the manner in which some outlets desire their information, or the proper person to contact. Presentation of material in an acceptable form to the proper person is a must.

Sell Your Story

In most instances, you must sell your ideas to the media. If you are unsuccessful at first: Stop! Look back! Analyze what you have done. Then take another approach.

With all the angles and complications of education today, Adult Basic Education is not what a seasoned newsman calls a "hot story." But, the program does have possibilities for printed articles, air time, or film footage. That's where you or your public information officer must come in and try to sell a story.

Don't approach the media with a chip on your shoulder; don't tell media personnel how a story should be handled; be humble, appreciative, and understanding; be enthusiastic, but not overbearing; be prepared to answer further questions. If you get a turn down, be ready to try another angle. Develop a sales pitch.

If you lose again, go in another direction. Remember that the presses aren't going to stop, the radio station isn't going to flash a bulletin, and the TV station is not going to interrupt a program for your story. But if it is presented properly, chances are you will get your fair share of time or space.

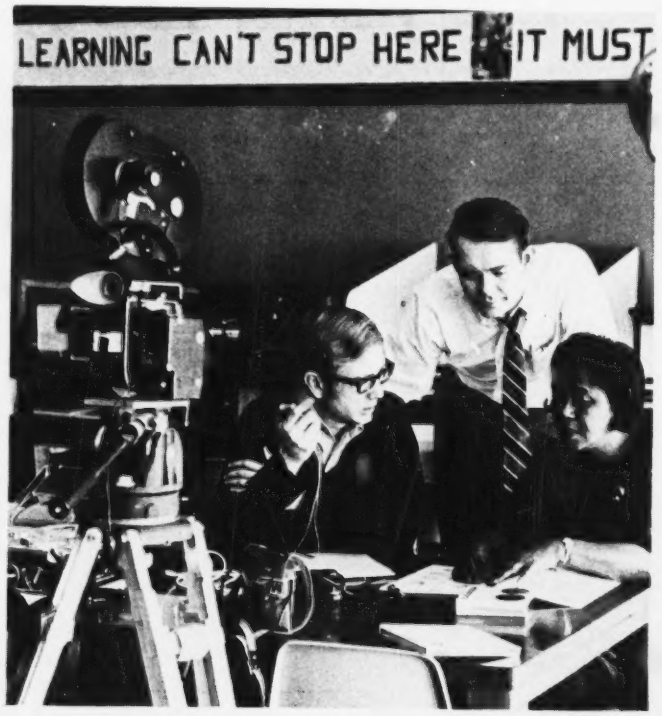
Be Understanding and Cooperative

Media personnel, in general, are leary of educators. The average newsman, radio announcer, or TV reporter has at one time or another approached an educator during a crisis or when he wanted information on a subject he considered news. The educator might not have considered the subject news, but the media person did.

In too many instances, media personnel are blocked by educators. They hear "no comment"; they hear the truth slightly rearranged. This makes them leary of educators, or reluctant to help when educators want and need help. Newsmen are like elephants – they have a good memory for situations which have made them look bad or have kept them from getting information they wanted.

Present the Facts

I know only too well the problems you face in tense situations, or when a reporter is trying to uncover something you prefer not be uncovered. Your loyalty is to your school system and it should be. Try to present the information requested in the best possible light without falsifying information, without refusing to comment, or without trying to talk "off the record." There's nothing a reporter dislikes any more than to have someone say "this is off the record."



Many educators have the unconscious attitude that they shouldn't be questioned or challenged; they apparently reason that, if it's for education it's for the good of the people. That day is gone forever. If it has to do with education, good or bad, news media personnel want to know and they will find out for themselves sooner or later, even if you don't cooperate. Unfortunately, if newspaper, radio, or TV personnel have to work the story for themselves – without your cooperation – it comes out much worse than if you cooperate.

Admit Your Mistakes

Remember, educators and public relations officers can be wrong. And we must not try to hide mistakes. Education is big business – it involves human beings and human beings make mistakes. Admitting a mistake is not a sin – no one expects you to be perfect.

Furthermore, we are property of Mr. Average Taxpayer, and because of this, our windows are open twenty-four hours a day. We must operate carefully in an efficient manner; we must keep our closets clean and not try to sweep our mistakes under the rug.

Don't get me wrong, not every mistake need be highly publicized. If a paper gets a tip on a story which has implications that don't look good to you, don't run. Face the music. Handle the questions to the best of your ability and the next time will be easier and results will be softer. Since schools are supported by tax money, the public has a right to know what is going on.

Review the Possibilities

The news media can help with recruitment. Many methods – news stories; feature stories; stories about the program, its aims and goals, about the faculty, about people in the program – are angles that can be used in newspaper, radio, TV, company publications, school papers, or any outlets which have possibilities of helping your program.

Keep in mind the importance of the manner in which you tell the story of the program, how you present it to the media, and how you get along with media personnel.

Remember also that newsmen see weaknesses in educators and that they are sometimes skeptical. Educators and school public relations officers must work toward proving that they are not trying to hide things. Then it will be easier to get publicity for specific programs.

Solving recruitment problems for a program such as Adult Basic Education is difficult. As I stated earlier, I neither pretend to recognize all the problems nor have all the answers. The following poem does, however, summarize my feelings:

It's easy to sit in the sunshine
and talk to the man in the shade,

It's easy to sit in a well-made boat
and tell others just where to wade,

It's easy to tell the toiler
how best to carry his pack,

But you'll never know the weight of the load,
until the pack is on your back.

The Learning Laboratory in Adult Basic Education

Title I Special Programs Staff

Many administrators of Ohio Adult Basic Education programs, in an effort to provide optimal opportunities to students who have less than an eighth-grade education or its functional equivalency, are currently developing imaginative approaches for program improvement. One approach has been the development of learning laboratories in which self-instructional techniques are used.

A learning laboratory contains an accumulation of commercially available or locally constructed programmed and self-instructional materials, which provide an educational program designed to meet adult objectives, needs, and abilities. A coordinator, as the person in charge of a learning laboratory is called, has responsibilities more encompassing than those of a teacher in the traditional classroom.

Several factors differentiate the learning laboratory from traditional classroom teaching. Among these factors are . . .

- the highly individualized program designed for each adult learner.
- the flexible schedule possible for each student.
- the role played by the learning laboratory coordinator.

TITLE I Special Programs Staff: James Miller, Section Chief; Eileen Young, Kenneth Gartrell and George Travis, Educational Consultants. Division of Federal Assistance, Ohio Department of Education.

THE LABORATORY

Ideally, a separate room should be set aside for fulltime use, particularly since many learning laboratories are open during the day as well as the evening. Such a room should have sufficient shelving for all regularly used instructional materials. Storage space should be provided for equipment and more costly materials.

If a separate room is not available, a suitable alternate should be found. For example, a school library usually lends itself to the

learning laboratory concept better than a regular classroom. A high school or junior high classroom with large desks is preferable to an elementary classroom. Within a secondary school, adults may feel more at ease in an industrial arts or home economics room than in another type of classroom. If suitable space is not available within a school building, other community resources should be considered. In many instances, community agencies or private businesses are most willing to provide space.

The number of adults that can meet in a laboratory is determined by the space available, the number of hours the laboratory is open, the availability of aides, the experience of the coordinator or coordinators, and the funds available.

Seating

A well-equipped learning laboratory should allow for individual preference by providing both carrels and tables for student use. An adult often prefers a carrel because it affords a better opportunity for concentration without distraction. Also, a beginning student may prefer the privacy of a carrel in order to use a wider range of materials. Another advantage of carrels is that they are especially suitable for certain kinds of equipment designed for use with programmed materials. Because of the space required for the use of various materials, tables are superior to desks, and in some cases are superior to carrels.

The coordinator's desk, or primary work area, should be positioned to provide a clear view of as many student areas as possible.

Organizing Materials

Instructional materials should be systematically organized for easy student access. A recommended system – if the physical setting of the room permits – is arranging all materials alphabetically by subject areas. Programs placed in each subject area location should be internally positioned according to reading level, progressing from the most basic to the most advanced levels.

If materials and equipment cannot be stored in the room used as a learning laboratory, portable carts can be obtained or constructed for storage and transportation purposes. With carts, materials can be used in several locations within a building and can be readily moved to facilities outside the public school.

Scheduling

Ideally, learning laboratories should be in operation at least ten to twelve hours daily, with hours of 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. being desirable. Students should spend a minimum of two to four hours a week in the laboratory, but may work as many additional hours as they desire. Students enrolled in a full-day learning laboratory program do not experience scheduling problems due to irregular working hours, baby sitting difficulties, or the many other problems that cause sporadic attendance or separation from the traditional Adult Basic Education program.

If budget or staff limitations preclude the ability to implement a full-time laboratory, other options exist. One possibility is a part-time laboratory that is open four evenings per week. Another consideration is keeping the laboratory open through the day and the evening with responsibilities shared by two coordinators and one or more aides.

A laboratory, which is open ten to twelve hours a day, staffed by a full-time coordinator and aide, can effectively serve one hundred fifty or more students. The work schedule can be arranged so that either the coordinator or aide is available at all times. A part-time laboratory open four evenings per week, staffed by a coordinator, working alone, can serve an enrollment of fifty or more students.

THE COORDINATOR

The key to the development of a successful learning laboratory in Adult Basic Education lies in the careful selection and training of the coordinator. The quality of performance by the coordinator spells the difference between success or failure.

A Successful Teacher and More!

To be successful, the coordinator should be . . .

- experienced in counseling techniques.
- knowledgeable in self-instructional techniques.
- familiar with the needs of adult learners.
- well organized and adaptable.
- able to solve educational problems and make related decisions.

Adult students, in many instances, are sensitive about educational needs, economic status, race, sex, and age. Therefore a person selected as a learning laboratory coordinator must be able to . . .

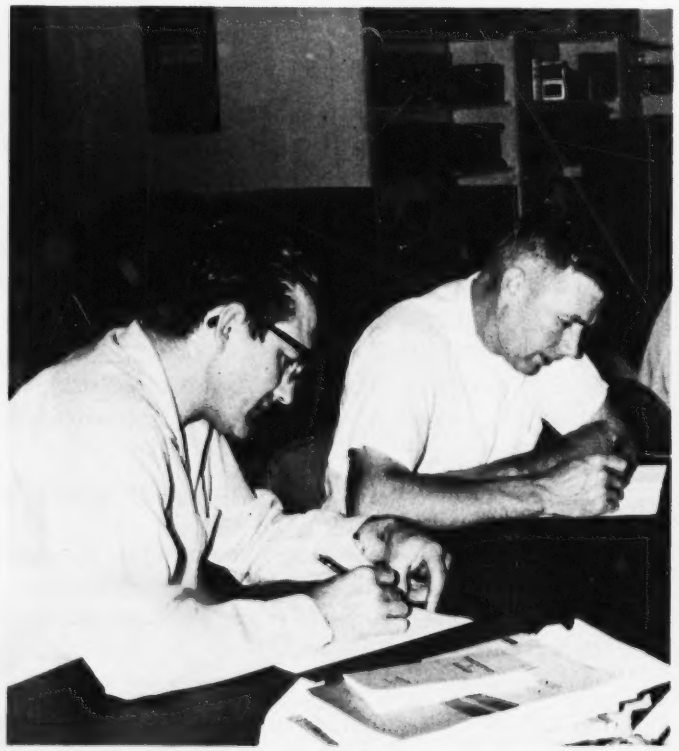
- make each student feel accepted.
- help the student overcome obstacles encountered in his educational program.
- handle referrals to other agencies, when necessary.
- make recommendations for job placement, vocational training, or other schooling.

The Coordinator's Role

The traditional role of the teacher changes with the laboratory approach to learning. With traditional instruction, primary interaction takes place between the student and the teacher. In the learning laboratory, the primary interaction is between the student and the programmed materials, with the coordinator functioning as a facilitator of learning. As a facilitator, the coordinator brings together the student and the information to be learned . . .

- by placing the student in a program where he will be successful.
- by serving as a resource person when the student has questions or experiences difficulty.
- by evaluating periodic tests as they are presented in the program.

A coordinator's function as a counselor begins with the initial interview with each student to be assigned to the learning laboratory. At that time, the student should be helped to clarify his objectives. A realistic schedule of time the student will spend in the laboratory should be established. Gains that can be expected within various periods of



time should be projected. A skillful coordinator, acting in a counselor role, often helps the student to rephrase generally stated objectives into specific terms and then helps the student set reasonably attainable short-term goals. Long-range satisfaction with achievement is the likely result.

In a learning laboratory, the coordinator is relieved of the time-consuming tasks of presenting information, supervising group activities, and checking students' routine work. He is free to devote time to activities that supplement the basic concepts presented by programmed materials. He has time to help individuals and small groups meet selected educational needs. Thus, a learning laboratory setting, rather than becoming dehumanizing and impersonal, presents a coordinator with increased opportunities for individual interpersonal relationships with students. The extent to which these relationships grow depends largely on the interests and efforts of the coordinator.

THE ADULT STUDENT

As a part of his initial contact with a coordinator, each prospective student is introduced to the laboratory, given diagnostic tests, and helped to clarify his educational goals. After test results have been analyzed, the coordinator places the student in an educational program designed to meet the student's specific goals and educational needs. The adult student then works at his own pace and at his own level of ability.

Collecting Basic Information

Each student should be interviewed, counseled, and tested individually before being placed in a program. Preferably, student-coordinator interviews should be scheduled on an individual basis. Arrangements are best if made by phone, or in person, so that a mutually agreed time can be established.

During the initial interview, the coordinator – not the prospective student – should complete a locally developed basic information

form. The reverse side of the form could be used for recording test data and placement recommendations.

Explaining the Laboratory and the Program

Depending on the amount of time the prospective student can spend during his initial interview with the coordinator, possible areas beyond completion of the basic information form that could be covered include:

- A simplified explanation of programmed learning and how it differs from traditional classroom instruction.
- A short tour of the laboratory, which may include demonstrations of materials and equipment.
- Discussion of a realistic commitment of hours per week to be spent in the laboratory.
- Clarification of student needs and goals.
- Explanation of testing and placement procedures.
- Establishment of student-coordinator rapport.

Placing the Student

Immediately after a student has been interviewed and his goals have been clarified, a program should be prescribed that will meet the student where he is and lead him toward his goals. Diagnostic testing needed for placement purposes should be completed as soon as possible. Reading and mathematics tests should be included. If a reading level of sixth grade or above is established, testing in English grammar is also recommended. Various commercially produced tests suitable for use with adult students are available. In some cases, test scores are correlated with student placement recommendations for specific instructional programs.

Initial student placement usually should be in reading or English. A second subject can be added later, when the student has made sufficient progress in the first program. Few students should initially work on more than one program at a time, or ever work on more than two programs concurrently.

After a program is prescribed, the final choice of the course should be up to the student. If a student is reluctant to try a recommended program, he should – if possible – be allowed to try an alternate program of his choice. In either case, the coordinator should periodically check student progress and recommend any needed changes in program placement.

Placement should be on a level where the student can maintain an eighty-five percent or better level of efficiency. If doubt exists as to initial placement, the coordinator should advise a lower level where the student can be successful rather than a higher level where frustration may result. Ideal placement should challenge the student, not bore him. He should be kept on a level that will promote maximum motivation and learning.

RECORDS

Various records will need to be developed to keep inventory of available programs, to chart enrollment and schedules, and to help students keep track of their progress. The types of records to be used and the specific information to be included will vary from district to district.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

The learning laboratory approach with its concentration on programmed learning is not a panacea for Adult Basic Education programs. A realistic appraisal indicates that programmed learning should be approached with the optimism that is essential for success, but with full awareness of potential trouble spots and possible disadvantages.

With careful planning and preparation, programmed learning can be successful. Without proper planning and preparation, lack of success can almost be guaranteed.

The school district planning to initiate the learning laboratory concept into its Adult Basic Education Program or needing to evaluate its on-going learning laboratory activities should find the following suggestions helpful:

- A separate room – or a suitable alternate such as a library, an industrial arts or home economics room, or a classroom with adult-size desks – should be available for use as a learning laboratory.
- Storage areas and shelving, both with easy access, should be available for instructional materials and equipment.
- Programmed materials, and related equipment, should be carefully selected on the basis of the contribution they can make to the educational objectives of the local program and on their appropriateness for adult use.
- Materials should be shelved or stored in an organized manner, preferably arranged by subject areas and internally organized by reading levels.
- Each coordinator should be carefully selected and, before being assigned students, be assisted in understanding the needs of adult learners and allowed sufficient time for familarization with available programs.
- Coordinators should have pre-service and in-service training.
- Students should be interviewed, tested, and counseled individually and introduced to the learning center one at a time.
- Initial student contact should include completion of a basic information form, clarification of student goals, discussion of programmed learning concepts, and arrangements for diagnostic testing and program placement.
- Accurate student placement is essential. Students should initially be placed in one program only (usually reading or English), with a second program added later–when student ability merits.
- Program assignment should be at a level where the student will achieve with eighty-five percent or better proficiency.
- Students who are functionally or totally illiterate (perhaps those testing below the third-grade level in reading) may require small group or individual instruction in phonics and other basic reading skills before being assigned programmed materials.
- Systems for necessary records should be developed and current files should be maintained for each student.

The seminar presentation and this article were adapted from The Learning Laboratory in Adult Basic Education, State of Ohio, Department of Education, 1969. Copies available on request from Title I Office, 3201 Alberta Street, Columbus, Ohio 43204.

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AUG 10 1970
on Adult Education

CREDITS

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- *Photography:*
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- *Typography:*
  Columbus Typographic Company

- *Lithography:*
  Byrum Lithographing Company, Inc.